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AUTHOR Sanders, Phyllis
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the parents', staff members', and students' satisfaction with the intersession activities of a year-round elementary school. "Intersession" is defined as the period of time when students receive remediation in problem areas. The school cited in the report was chosen from a district that had recently implemented a year-round education system. The study focused on three areas: the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students (1) as it relates to intersessions; (2) as it relates to remediation activities offered during intersessions and whether these activities met academic needs; and (3) as it relates to satisfaction with enrichment activities offered during intersession. Interviews were conducted with parents of year-round students, staff members who teach at the school, and the students who attend the school. The results show that all those interviewed were pleased with the enrichment activities during intersession, even those participants with negative feelings toward certain aspects of intersession. Teachers expressed concerns in regards to the remedial procedures used during intersession, stating that intersession did not meet the academic needs of the students. Most of the participants interviewed expressed a desire to return to the traditional calendar. Appended are: Intersession Forms and Photographs of Events. (Contains 11 references.) (RJM)

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Parent, Teacher, and Student Satisfaction with Year-Round School Intersession

Phyllis Sanders, University of Louisiana at Monroe

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Changes in education have caused educators to look for better ways to educate our children. Students are required to meet higher standards and be more responsible in their learning process. Advocates of year-round education are convinced that the year-round schooling will ensure that students' learning is continuous.

Year-round education is a concept that breaks up the three-month vacation of the agrarian calendar, and it provides better learning opportunities for students during the school year (Frazier & Morrison, 1988; & Shook, 1999). Year-round education is based on a single track or a multi-track system. In single-track year-round education, all the students follow the same attendance schedule as that noted in the traditional calendar school. In multi-track year-round education, students are assigned to one of several tracks that are on staggered attendance schedules (Knesse, 1996). Usually, single-track plans are implemented to enhance learning by reducing the time period between learning loss; a multi-track system is used to reduce class size.

Statement of the Problem

The 1998-1999 school year marked the first year of implementation of year-round education in the Monroe City School System. An elementary school site was selected to pilot the program . The school implemented the single-track year-round education plan.

In an effort to determine the level of satisfaction with intersession in this particular year-round schools, interviews were conducted with the following participants: parents of year round students, staff members who teach at the year-round school, and the students who attend this particular school.

An intersession can be defined as the period of time where students receive remediation in troubled areas. Students who attend school on a year-round school calendar

do just that; they attend school all year, thus, resulting in them not having the opportunity to attend summer school to bring up possible failing grades.

This two-week vacation period allows students to bring up failing grades at the end of each nine weeks. Students may also enroll in enrichment courses. Some enrichment courses offered include basketball, sewing, soccer, arts and crafts, and piano.

Parents of those students who need to attend an intersession are notified by letter which also includes a list of all the courses to be offered and the times those courses will be offered. The parents select the courses they want their children to attend, and they complete the request schedule. (See Appendix A) After receiving the forms, the principal prepares a class roster. There is a $5.00 fee for each two-hour class. If the child rides the bus to school, he/she is required to take three classes. Parents who do not wish their children to stay the entire day may pick their children up after their class has ended. The students attend for one week; they participate in remediation or enrichment classes, whichever is required or requested. The building is closed the second week.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the satisfaction level of parents, staff members, and students as it pertained to the intersession activities of this particular year-round school. The research consisted of interviews which focused on the overall satisfaction with intersession activities of year-round schooling. The interviews were conducted before, during, and after school. The participants included teachers, students, and parents.

Research Questions

The research questions focused on the following areas of interest:

1. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students as it relates to intersessions?

2. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students with the remediation activities that are offered during intersessions? Did these activities meet the academic needs of the students?

3. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students with the enrichment activities that are offered during intersessions? Did these activities meet the academic needs of the students?

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The year-round education tracks are usually implemented for the purposes of reform, since its purpose is to enhance students' learning by providing a schedule which minimizes learning loss (Hazelton, Blakely, & Denton, 1992). Single track is generally a first step in the implementation of the year-round school (Kneese, 1996).

Benefits

Traditional curriculum content continues to be used with the year-round schedule; however, students' learning can progress with less of an interruption during summer. Continuity of instruction, along with remedial reviews offered during breaks help reduce the number of students who must be retained in a grade (Harris, 1995).

Intersession

Intersession is the period of time where students who are failing receive extra help in those troubled areas in an effort to bring up their grades. Enrichment courses are also offered. The focus of the enrichment courses is primarily hands-on, which contributes greatly to group instruction. Small groups are used more frequently during intersessions than during the regular nine week period.

During intersession, teachers are given a set of criteria from the students' homeroom teacher. Students are required to master this material before the beginning of the next grading period. The teacher presents material to be learned to the students. After the material has been presented and reviewed, students are tested for mastery of the material. If the material is mastered, the students advance to the next unit. However, if the material is not mastered, the students do not advance. These reviews are continuous throughout the week. Students are tested at the end of the week. If the students score the required passing score, the failing letter grade is changed to a passing grade (i.e., students can move from an "F" to a "D").

This allows students to resume classwork at a level comparable to that of their classmates when instruction begins a new (Ballinger, 1995).

Those participating in year-round schools have varied views as to the necessity of year-round schooling and its effectiveness. Hoffman, Wallace, and Reglin (1991) studied teacher attitudes on year-round schools. The results indicated that the majority of year-round school teachers considered the year-round school program equal or superior to the traditional calendar program, particularly as it related to the flexibility of the work schedule. However, the following problems were cited as areas of concern: (a) student discipline, (b) the ease of providing remedial services, (c) time lost in getting students to settle down to work after vacation periods, (d) tiring efforts of students, and (e) learning loss of vacation periods.

Opheim, Mohajer, and Read (1995) questioned principals about potential problems for parents and communities. Principals were asked if year-round schooling affected the following in any way: (a) their family leisure time, (b) extracurricular activities, or (c) child care.

Concerns

Pittman and Herzog (1998) studied year-round schooling in a rural community in North Carolina. The researchers gathered data on achievement, attendance, and attitudes of participants. After gathering and interpreting the data, it was determined that the rural communities were disrupted when a year-round program existed.

Orellena and Thorne (1998) explored how the element of time affected elementary school children who attended a year-round school program. The data were collected through interviews and participant observation, and it revealed that the increased number of days students attended school, in a effort to create more learning opportunities for the students, could disrupt families life-styles.

In another study of parent satisfaction with year-round education, the results revealed that parents were pleased with year-round schooling. Shenkman (1997) noted that parent satisfaction with year-round schooling has not been measured separately from the satisfaction with school in general. The researcher stated that though most parents were satisfied with the year-round schedule, they still preferred the traditional calendar.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this study, levels of satisfaction of parents, staff members, and students as they relate to intersession activities in year-round education were examined. The following areas were explored: (a) the overall satisfaction with intersession, (b) satisfaction with remediation activities, and (c) satisfaction with enrichment activities. Participant observation and interviews were used to gather the data regarding satisfaction. Purposive sampling was employed based on the time frame in which to conduct this study, and the school that was selected for this study was readily accessible.

The school site

The selected elementary school site implemented a single-track plan which allowed students and teachers to attend classes and have vacations on the same schedule. The year was divided into four nine-week sessions with a two-week vacation following the end of each nine-week period. During the intersessions, students had the option of attending week-long enrichment classes or enrolling in remedial courses to make-up failing grades.

Participants

The selected school site was an elementary school with grades Pre-K thru Six. The school's enrollment is approximately 500 students. The faculty consisted of about 35 teachers, aides, administrative assistants, and custodial staff. During intersession, the faculty consists of approximately 10 - 12 teachers, one office assistant, three custodial staff members, and three cafeteria staff members . Students from the local university, who have been accepted into the education degree program, often assist the school with intersession activities. Student participation in intersessions ranges from 70 to 80 percent. The participants in this study included faculty members who taught during an intersession, students who enrolled in an intersession, and their parents.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted before the start of morning classes, during recess periods, and after school. Interview sessions ranged from 5 to 7 minutes. Notes were taken and later transcribed. To provide commonality among the interviews, a set of predetermined questions was used. The data gathered from the interviews were categorized by color codes and grouped according to similar response patterns. Participants were told that their names would not be revealed in the study and that the information they shared would be confidential.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Prior to interviews, the participants were told that this study would help provide insight in regards to the attitudes of those involved in year-round schools. Once all the interviews and observations were completed and transcribed, the data were examined. Statements were color coded according to theme patterns.

Themes

The following themes emerged from the data:

1. Class size
2. Discipline problems
3 Fun activities/enrichment
4. Remediation (pros and cons)
5. Vacation opportunities
6. Attitudes

Each theme was examined individually. The words of the participants were included in this analysis along with the different views of the participants.

The information gathered from the observations and interviews is discussed in terms of the following research questions:

1. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students as it relates to the intersessions?

2. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students with the remediation activities that are offered during the intersession? Did these activities meet the academic needs of the students?

3. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students with the enrichment activities that are offered during the intersession?

Did these activities meet the academic needs of the students?

Attitudes Toward Year-round School Intersession

Parents expressed satisfaction with intersession. A few parents stated that they were very satisfied with intersession. One noted, "I really like the fun classes." Yet some of the parents expressed concern over the fewer number of enrichment courses that were offered. She stated, "There use to be a variety of classes offered, but I noticed that there were fewer selections for enrichment courses now."

All of the students conveyed a positive attitude toward intersession. The students made the following comments:

1. "It's fun!"

2. "I like switching classes."

3. "You can bring up bad grades."

Teachers also expressed satisfaction with the intersession breaks. They commented as follows:

1. "My breaks are the best part. I make extra money when I work during intersession. I can take a vacation during the school year."

2. "I love the breaks. I get so much done around the house. I am not as tired."

3. One teacher expressed concern over the amount of days students were not in school, "I like the breaks, but they are too close together. By the time you get the students into a rhythm, it is time to be out again."

Attitudes Toward Remedial Classes

Pros

Remediation is a crucial time during intersession. Students who failed during the nine weeks have an opportunity to make up the failing grade. This idea appeared to be very appealing to the students and parents. One parent stated, "I like the idea of the children being able to make bad grades [and have an opportunity to make them up]. If the school

didn't have intersession, the kids would fail." Many parents shared this idea. Even though their children did not have to take the remedial courses, they were pleased that these courses did exist and would be there if their children needed them.

Cons

Teachers did not share this enthusiasm. They expressed concerns over the difficulty in teaching students nine weeks of work in a one week period. Their comments included:

1. "You have twenty kids on different levels, and you are supposed to catch them up in a week. It's hard. There needs to be some changes."

2. "I don't think it is appropriate to change a grade. Students come five days, and they are passed in subjects they have failed over nine weeks."

3. "I don't think there is enough time to remediate what was taught during the nine weeks. Maybe if it were two weeks."

Class Size/Discipline

During intersession, the remedial classes appeared to be small. The class sizes ranged from 2-16. However, most of the enrichment classes were full. It appeared that discipline was a problem during intersession. In an arts and crafts class, seven students were sitting around a table making Easter baskets. (See notes in Appendix) The students talked out of turn and were very loud. Some even made rude comments about other students and the teacher. One student said, " . . . is a dog."

Observer Comments

I wondered if the noise bothered her. I wished she would tell them to settle down. In another class, I observed a student teacher teaching a math game where the students were uncooperative. The teacher threatened to take points away from the talkative team. The students continued to talk.

The reading teacher had two students in her class. The students were engaged in an on-line discussion of the Titanic.

The teacher sat behind the students and walked them through the assignment. (See Appendix)

Observer Comments

In my opinion, it was a shame that only two students were in the class. The classroom teacher was in the room, and I wondered why she did not say anything.

Attitudes Toward Enrichment Classes

During intersession, the students have a variety of enrichment activities to select. The activities may include, but are not limited to, the following: (a) kickball, (b) soccer, (c) basketball, (d) piano, (e) music, (f) arts and crafts, (g) sewing, (h) dance, (i) cheerleading, (j) cookie decorating, and (k) drill team.

It appeared that the enrichment courses during intersession were most popular with the students and parents. However, one parent expressed concerns over the limited amount of enrichment courses offered during this particular intersession period. These classes had the highest enrollment. I observed a first grade kickball class. There were 20 boys in this class. The boys were dressed in t-shirts, shorts, and tennis shoes. They appeared to be excited. They yelled, jumped up and down, and clapped their hands. The instructor told me that they were just learning to play the game, and that was obvious. They were putting their own teammates out. Some of them watched the ball roll right by them. There were others who were more involved. They yelled things like, "Stay here!" "He blocking the base!" "Touch the base!" and "He out!" (See Appendix)

Observer comments

The instructor appeared to be tickled as she watched them play. I wondered if she thought the kids could learn to play or was this just for fun. They were so cute.

The students in the music class sang beautifully after the teacher threatened to have them write lines for being disruptive.

He explained to the students, "Not everybody can sing at the same time, singing different songs." I enjoyed the singing, and the students appeared to have enjoyed the class, too.

The teacher also thought the enrichment courses were fun for the students because it gave the students something to do. The teacher said, "They get to have a lot of fun. They think of it as recess all day."

Vacations

Teachers seemed to have enjoyed the intersession breaks. The opportunity to take vacations appealed to most of them. One teacher cited experiencing less burnout as a benefit of intersession. Others commented as follows:

1. "My breaks . . . , that's the best part. I can take a vacation during the school year."

2. "I love the breaks. I get so much done around the house. I am not as tired."

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary and conclusions.

Parents, teachers, and students were interviewed regarding their overall satisfaction with year-round intersession. The purpose of this study was to examine the satisfaction of parents, staff members, and students as it pertains to intersession activities. The study attempted to provide some insight to the following research questions:

1. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students as it relates to the intersessions?

2. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students with the remediation activities that are offered during the intersession? Did these activities meet the academic needs of the students?

3. What is the overall satisfaction of parents, staff, and students with the enrichment activities that are offered during the intersession? Did these activities meet the academic needs of the students?

All the participants who were interviewed were pleased with the enrichment activities during intersession, even those with negative feelings toward certain aspects of intersession. Teachers expressed concerns in regards to the remedial procedures used during intersession. It appeared that most of the teachers felt intersession did not meet the academic needs of the students.Most of the participants interviewed expressed a desire to return to the traditional calendar.

Recommendations

Most of the people who participated in this study cited some positive aspect of intersession. However, the desire to return to the traditional calendar suggested that more qualitative research should be conducted to effectively determine participant satisfaction in

all areas of intersession. This study found that most teachers, who taught remedial courses during intersession, do not feel the academic needs of the students were being met.

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Appendices

INTERSESSION #2
January 24 – 28

What is Intersession?

After attending school for a nine-week period, regular school is out for two weeks. One of these weeks is used for students who choose to return to school for specific classes. It is a smaller group of students and the skills taught are very specific.

Why go to Intersession?

1. If your child has missed an excessive number of days, he/she can be given credit for 5 days attendance.

2. Your child can possibly change a failing grade to a passing grade by mastering skills he/she was deficient in.

3. Your child can have fun activities that students rarely get an opportunity to do at school.

When is Intersession?

Our second intersession will be January 24 - 28. We have a variety of activities being offered. Each student may sign up for 1, 2, or 3 classes. Those student signing up for 3 classes will stay all day and will be provided with bus transportation. Breakfast and lunch will be served and the charge will be the same as a regular school week.

How much does it cost?

Each class costs $5.00 for the week (a maximum of $15.00 for 3 classes). There will be an additional fee charged for classes that has to have extra supplies that will belong to the student.

How can I register?

Fill out the attached form and send it back to school by <u>Friday, January 14th</u>. So that classes can be scheduled. Classes are filled as soon as the forms are returned. Your child will receive a class schedule and/or confirmation form.

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DISCOVERY DETECTIVES

READING FUNDAMENTALS Grades 1 – 6

Students will receive instruction in the skills identified by their classroom teachers. Instruction will be in small groups and skill-oriented. Mastery of the areas identified could result in a passing grade for the 9 weeks.

MATH SLEUTHS Grades 1 – 6

Students will receive instruction in the skills identified by their classroom teachers. Instruction will be in small groups and skill-oriented. Mastery of the areas identified could result in a passing grade for the 9 weeks.

SCIENCE EXPLORERS GRADES 4 – 6

Students will receive instruction in the areas identified by their classroom teachers. Instruction will be in small groups. Mastery of the content areas identified could result in a passing grade for the 9 weeks.

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Tickle-the-Ivories: Grades 2 thru 6.

Each class is limited to 10 students. Very popular class with our students to learn the notes of the treble and bass clef staff, and notes on the piano. Students will play simple pieces using the right and left hands, including simple cording. Each student will need his or her own piano book.

Where's the Flag: Grade 1 – 6 (boys only).

Flag football. Find the flag and pull it out! Learn the techniques of football without the physical contact.

Shoot the Hoop: Grades 1 – 3

Basic basketball skills and teamwork. Warm up exercise included.

One, two, kick and turn: grades 1 – 6(girls only)

Learn fancy stepping and marching of dance and drill team. Warm-up exercise included.

Will You Be My Valentine?: Grades 1 – 6

Make a valentine basket with canvas and yarn. 50 cents for the materials needed. The baskets will be for the student to keep.

YMCA DAYCARE OR AFTERSCHOOL CARE

$40.00 All day $30.00 after-school

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Registration Sheet: **Please return to school by: Friday, January 14th

Name_____ Grade_____ Teacher _____

Circle no more than one class each period.

	PRE-K & K	GRADES 1 – 3	GRADES 4 – 6
PERIOD I 8:15 – 10:00	All activities are directed by their teacher's	Reading – 3rd grade Math – 2nd grade Piano – limit 10 Needlecraft Flag football Drill team	Reading – 4th grade Math – 5th grade Science – 6th grade Create-a-Book Testing ITBS – 6th grade Gator Geometry Drill Team
PERIOD II 10:15 - 12:00		Reading – 1st grade Math – 3rd grade Create-a-Book Basketball Drill Team	Reading – 5th grade Math – 6th grade Science – 4th grade Needlecraft Algebra Mania BETA Bonanza Testing LEAP – 4th grade Flag football
PERIOD III 1:00 - 3:00		Reading 2nd grade Math – 1st grade Needlecraft Drill Team Volleyball Grades 2, 3, 4 Limited to 20 students	Reading – 6th grade Math – 4th grade Science – 5th grade Testing ITBS – 5th grade Create-a-Book Flag Football BETA Jeapardy
YMCA: _____ $40.00 All day		_____ $30.00	

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Student Name _____

Intersession Homeroom Teacher _____ Room Number _____

Amount Paid _____ Amount Owed _____

SCHEDULE

CLASS	TIME	ROOM NO.	TEACHER	COST
	8:15 - 10:00			
	10:15 - 12:00			
	12:45 - 2:45			

Each student must be enrolled in 3 classes to remain at school all day. Bus transportation is provided for those enrolled in 3 classes. Otherwise, parents must provide transportation for their child(ren) to picked up after class(es).

Students should report to their 1st period class on Monday morning and sit outside that teacher's room until 8:00.

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INTERSESSION

Grade: _____ NAME PERIOD I PERIOD II PERIOD III

NAME	PERIOD I	PERIOD II	PERIOD III

26

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Appendix B

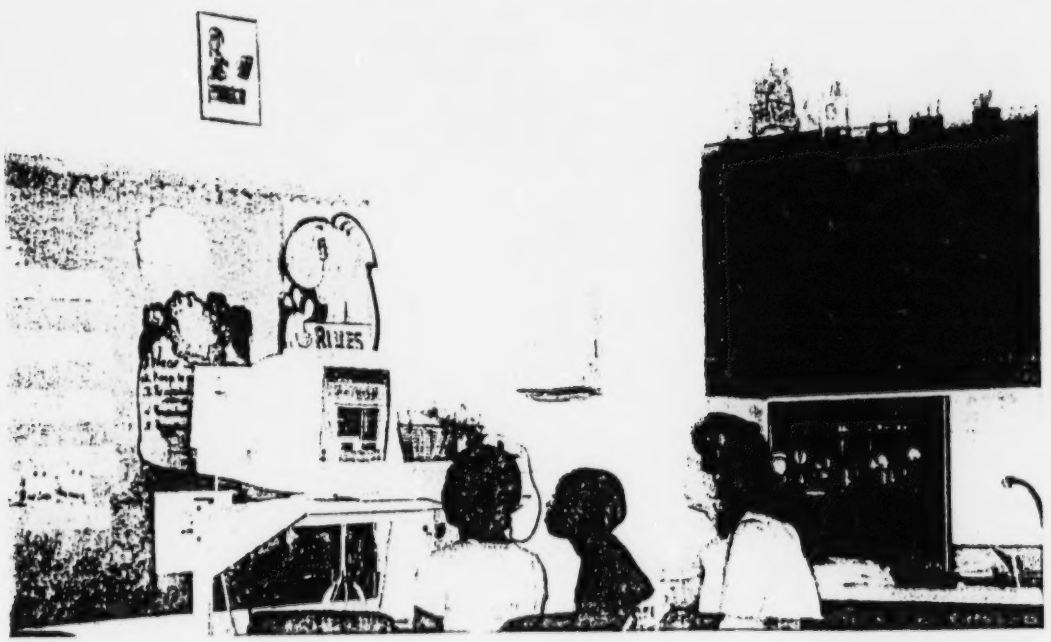
Photographs of Events

Students Making Easter Baskets

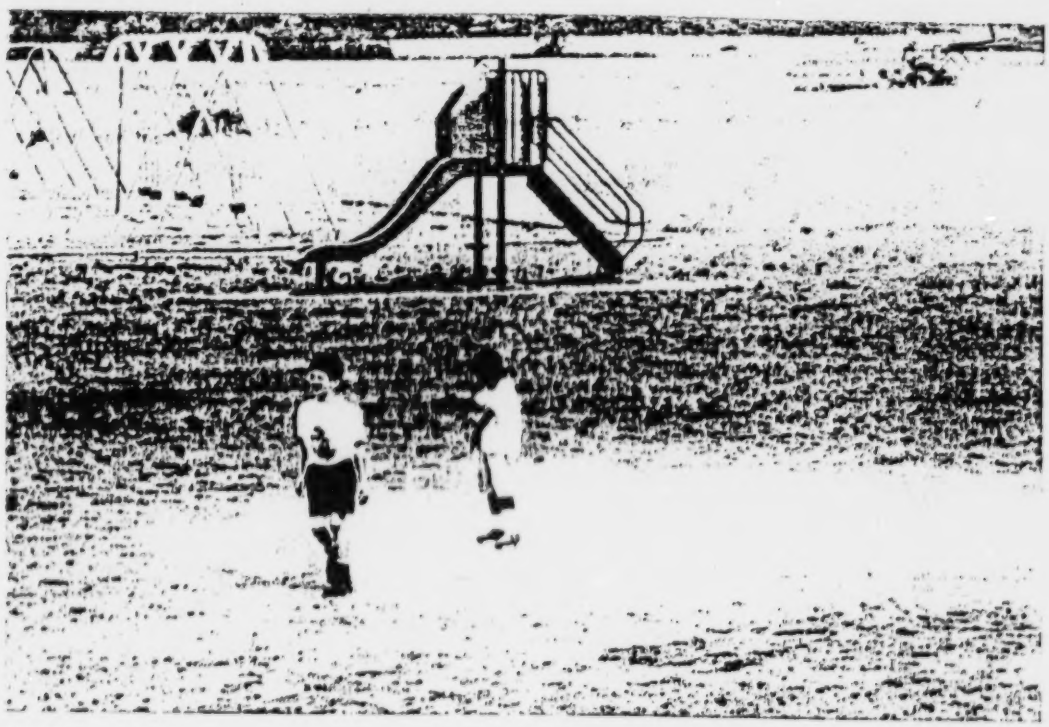
Students Engaged in a Math Game

Students Completing On-line Discussion on the Titanic

(Reading Class)



First Graders Playing Kickball



Students in Music

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